

## STATEMENT

# U.S. Embassy Azerbaijan Statement on the NIDA Trial Outcome

The U.S. Embassy in Azerbaijan is deeply disappointed by the May 6 decision to sentence eight youth activists to lengthy prison terms on highly questionable charges.

We repeatedly encouraged Azerbaijani authorities to ensure a fair trial and respect for due process. While we welcomed Azerbaijani authorities' willingness to allow us and other Western embassies to monitor the trial, we observed numerous irregularities, including inconsistencies in witness testimonies. We also heard accounts of authorities' mishandling of evidence and disregard for legal search procedures.

We again urge the Azerbaijani Government to live up to its international human rights commitments, particularly in light of Azerbaijan's upcoming chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers.

As Ambassador Morningstar recently said, "The United States believes Azerbaijan will have greater stability by allowing for a more open society." We remain committed to working with the Azerbaijani Government and the Azerbaijani people to support Azerbaijan's journey towards democratization.